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ABSTRACT

The interest of U.S. presidents in public education has grown increasingly intense since World War II. This has been due largely to the nation's emergence as an international economic and political power, and a corresponding demand for an educated workforce. This paper surveys presidential administrations from Franklin Roosevelt to George Bush in terms of education policy and focuses on the educational leadership provided by individual presidents. The paper also considers the questions of whether education should be treated as a fundamental right of American citizens and whether there should be a constitutional amendment to that effect. (DB)

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AMERICAN PRESIDENTS AND EDUCATION

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The role of the President of the United States in education is changing. As the American economy became sophisticated the demand for an educated work force increased. This transformation was most dramatic after World War II as America emerged as a dominant economic and world power.

Consequently, American presidents have become gradually aware of national and international pressures to shape educational policies for America. They have responded in varying fashion, some more education minded than others. However, national concern with education has increasingly developed within presidential councils. Some presidents were at the center of large scale educational reform such as Johnson and Reagan. Others have mainly continued past policies such as Nixon and Bush. But, there has been an unbroken chain of presidential interest growing in intensity since Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

In the early Republic, the founding fathers stressed education mainly as a tool for citizenship. Having successfully gained independence through a revolution, they were especially concerned that democracy be preserved. And they perceived education as the best means to insure that democracy would prevail at home. Only during the Civil War was there a presidential recognition in the 19th century that education could be advanced for economic reasons. Presidential interest in education was periodic until World War II. With the rise of an economy increasingly dependent on new

technology, American presidents were confronted with the need to develop a more educated workforce.

There have basically been three ways in which a President of the United States has influenced national educational policy. Some have proposed federal programs to address national issues. Others have mainly used the office of the presidency as a rhetorical presidency or "bully pulpit" to advocate reforms undertaken by others, mainly the states. And third, some have both used the "bully pulpit" and have established federal education programs.

The concept of a "rhetorical president" has been developed by a number of political scientists, most notably James W. Caesar of the University of Virginia. First enunciated by President Woodrow Wilson the concept of the rhetorical presidency is that the president influences policy mainly through communications. He becomes the "Teacher and Preacher-in-Chief." Through mass communications, the president uses his office to influence public opinion, and, in turn policy makers on the state and federal levels.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

The role of the president in education, therefore, has largely been determined by the economic transformation of American society. However, as national educational responsibilities grew, American presidents have been constrained by a constitutional framework that appears outdated. Prior to the 20th century, education had scant national implications. In a largely agricultural and mercantile society, the decision to leave education to the states by our founding fathers seemed reasonable. However, with the rise of the

Industrial Revolution, and later the Technological Revolution, the nations' education needs were compounded.

Nevertheless, American presidents have attempted to mold policies within this framework. The result has been that national education policy in the 29th century, for the most part, lacks a planned and consistent form. This raises the question whether there be a need for a constitutional amendment establishing a national context for education.

The conventional wisdom holds that education holds a low presidential priority. This argument is based on a historical consensus regarding the United States Constitution. Our founding fathers failure to mention education in the constitution came to mean that, by default, education had become a state responsibility. In turn, states delegate much of that responsibility to localities. Most important, these constitutional constraints have limited--and in many cases,-inhibited presidents in setting national education policy. Consequently, few American presidents have exercised distinctive and wide ranging educational leadership.

A POLITICAL ISSUE

By the mid-1980's, education had become a national political issue. In the 1984 campaign, polls indicated that the American public ranked education second only to unemployment as a campaign issue---higher than foreign policy or the pressing federal deficit.¹ In 1987, a Gallup Poll revealed that Americans overwhelmingly felt a need for national leadership in education. An average of three quarters of the public desired a strong federal role on ten of eleven issues from promoting educational programs

to providing leadership to states with "national problems in education."² In the 1988 presidential campaign, members of the League for Women Voters indicated that they perceived education to be "far out in front" of such campaign issues as health care, arms control and defense combined.³ And the 1988 campaign was a watershed in American education politics. For the first time, all presidential candidates were concerned with education. Moreover, it also marked the first time that education had become a bipartisan issue.

EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

What has happened between 1789 and 1990 to make education a crucial national responsibility? The economic scenario has changed dramatically. America went from an agricultural nation to a manufacturing, to a post-industrial, to a technological society. Beginning with the Industrial Revolution in the mid-19th century Americans needed more and more education to be able to accomplish their economic tasks.

The turning point for a national concern with education came after World War II. America emerged as an international world economic and political power. Somewhat reluctantly, American presidents were confronted with the educational demands of a technological age.

Prior to the Civil War, the United States was, according to one economic historian, "in truth an 'undeveloped' country."⁴ After the war, the Industrial Revolution made America a dominant economic power and prosperous. By 1890, the United States was the leading industrial nation in the world surpassing Great Britain and

Germany. However, early capitalism did not require large amounts of educational preparation for the workforce.

World War II proved an economic watershed. Industrial capitalism entered an advanced stage: technology. The question was no longer how much could America manufacture, but how sophisticated was the product. And advanced technology required a more educated workforce. This fact confronted Presidents concerned over national policy.

In large measure, the Federal government was responsible for the new technology. Government defense subsidies during the war created new industries and increased productivity. Most important, this aid hastened many technological breakthroughs. Among these were atomic power, electronics, chemicals and the aerospace industries. For example, electronics catapulted from 49th to 5th place in the industries of the nation.⁵

With technology came dramatic increases in education, especially higher education. The latter was aided by federal government policies. For America's educators after World War II, the task was to convince political leaders of the rising levels of education that were needed. "Technological change created a need for an educated people, "the educational historian Diane Ravitch concluded, "and educated people stimulated technological change."⁶

After World War II educational participation rose significantly. In 1950, slightly over 83% of elementary school age children were in school in a population of over 150 million.⁷ By 1988, over 88% were in school from a population estimated at over

245 million.⁸ In 1948, 52.6% graduated from high school; by 1986 fully 73% did.⁹

These figures are even more dramatic for college age students. Whereas in 1870 only 52,000 attended college, and in 1900 less than a quarter of a million, in 1950 nearly 2.7 million students were in college.¹⁰ By 1986, 54.8% of the cohort age attended college totalling over twelve and a half million students.¹¹

ROOSEVELT & TRUMAN AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's contribution to education as a national issue was substantive in its impact. First, Roosevelt was responsible for the G.I. Bill of Rights which provided subsidized higher education for veteran and ushered in the era of mass higher education. Second, Roosevelt introduced a crucial philosophical concept that emerged from the G.I. Bill of Rights process: the right to education.

The idea of a right to education was proposed by Roosevelt in a 1942 report on the development of natural resources. Roosevelt would call for the extension of the constitutions' Bill of Rights. He wanted to add to the "old freedoms" some "new freedoms."¹¹ Among these "new freedoms," Roosevelt enunciated "the right to education."¹² It was the eighth of nine "new freedoms." Roosevelt would propose "the right to education for work, for citizenship and for personal growth and happiness."¹³ The other seven rights dealt with fair pay, "the right to adequate, food, clothing, shelter and medical care," security, free enterprise, "the right to equality," and rest and recreation.¹⁴

Roosevelt's idea of a right to education was pursued by this successor, Harry S. Truman. In 1947, Truman created a Commission on Higher Education to study the issue of universal higher education. In a series of reports, the Commission proclaimed education to be "the foundation of democratic liberties."¹⁵ Most important, the "democratic creed...assumes (education) to be their (Americans) birthright; an equal chance with all others to make the most of their native abilities."¹⁶

Roosevelt can be credited with a major role in developing the G.I. Bill of Rights. He created the National Resources Planning Board in 1939, which served as a policy arm. He was instrumental in drafting broad policy with his nine "new rights," including education. And he publicly declared that he wanted education to be an important component of any program for returning veterans.¹⁷

The National Resources Planning Board appointed a smaller committee of educators and military personnel to consider benefits for returning service personnel. Roosevelt was convinced that education be a vital part of the program. Although he sought to avoid publicity over the pending veterans program, he made one exception in 1942 when he announced that a "committee of educators" was considering a program that would allow:

young men whose education has been interrupted to resume their schooling and afford equal opportunity for the training and education for other young men of ability after their service in the armed forces come to an end.¹⁸

Nevertheless, Roosevelt preferred not to lobby strenuously for the administrations version of the bill. Since the American Legion had a somewhat similar version, he preferred the veterans organiza-

tion to "keep the initiative" and successfully lobby for their bill in Congress.¹⁹ Nonetheless, Roosevelt's role in developing broad policy and the initiation of his policy group in devising the first proposal are sufficient in crediting him with a key role in the G.I. Bill of Rights

The G.I. Bill of Rights transformed American higher education. The G.I. Bill enabled over 2 million World War II and Korean veterans to take advantage of higher education creating mass higher education.

EISENHOWER AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

On October 4, 1957 during Eisenhower's second term, the Soviet Union was the first to launch craft---Sputnik---into space. Sputnik set off hysteria in the minds of the American public. It was feared that the Russians, the arch-Cold War enemy, had gained superiority in the race in space, also perhaps, in national defense. And the immediate reaction of many political figures and educators was to blame the schools for Americas' inferior position in space.

Eisenhower was swept up in the Sputnik hysteria. But federal interference created an ideological problem for him. Opposed to a strong federal role, he still saw the need for some federal action.

The National Defense Education Act of 1958 was President Eisenhower's and the Democratic Congresses' reply to Sputnik. The heart of the act would provide loan monies for students interested in science.

NDEA had significant impact. By 1964, almost three quarters of a million students had received NDEA monies. The historian of NDEA, Barbara Clowse, concluded that "enough men and women had taken advantage of the assistance to have influenced the United States educational system."²⁰

Others were critical of Eisenhower's leadership during Sputnik. Eisenhower's biographer, Stephen Ambrose, although sympathetic to his subject, would feel that Eisenhower's leadership in the Sputnik hysteria resulted in "a great opportunity wasted."²¹ Ambrose argued that "Eisenhower could have used the post-Sputnik hysteria to vastly strengthen the educational system in the United States."²²

KENNEDY AND FEDERAL AID

John F. Kennedy did not have any success in enacting a federal aid to education bill. His inability to persuade Congress combined with an untimeliness resulted in failure. Nevertheless, his constant pressure laid the groundwork for Lyndon Johnson's later success. Indeed, as one analyst observed: "what was refused during his lifetime was given freely after his death."²³

Federal aid to education was the cornerstone of Kennedy's New Frontier. Professor Paul Light polled Kennedy aides on the major domestic concerns of the Kennedy administration. The highest number, ninety-one percent, cited federal aid to education as a major Kennedy priority.²⁴ This was followed by policy discussions of Medicare, unemployment and civil rights as the fifth policy issue with only 18% mentioning it.²⁵ Indeed, Kennedy was to

deliver three special messages to Congress on federal aid to education. And he maintained a "bully pulpit" on education.

One of the reasons Kennedy was unsuccessful in the passage of a federal aid to education bill was the nature of that proposal. Kennedy mainly repackaged older versions of federal aid bills to give monies for school construction and the raising of teacher salaries. Such items were not designed to obviate the opposition of religious groups, especially the Catholic Church, who wanted any aid to include them. By Johnson's attempt in 1965, the focus was brilliantly shifted to aiding the child---a concept that skirted the constitutional issue of Church and State. Another reason Kennedy had lack of success in this area was his weak relations with Congress. Kennedy had neither the temperament to persuade Congress nor the status of a Congressional "insider" that Lyndon Johnson enjoyed.

LYNDON JOHNSON AND EQUITY REFORM MOVEMENT

Lyndon B. Johnson was the ultimate "Education President." He coined the phrase to describe himself. Moreover, he was an education president by design and not by accident as was the case with Ronald Reagan.

For Johnson, education was the key ingredient of his "Great Society." He promoted education both through a "bully pulpit" and with substantive education programs.

Johnson wanted to be remembered in history chiefly as the "Education President." He could point to over 60 education bills signed into the law during his tenure--including the historic first

federal aid to education act. He wanted to be known as the president" who wants our era remembered as the education era."²⁶

Actually, Johnson inherited his national agenda from President John F. Kennedy. The major domestic event of Johnson's time was the civil right movement. It was an idea whose time had come, and Johnson would reverse his conservative Southern prejudices to help enact major civil rights laws. Concomitantly, mass poverty had been rediscovered during the early 1960's. Consequently, poverty and civil rights were to blend together as policy objectives for the federal government.

For Johnson, education was both a means to an end and an end in itself. His press secretary, George Reedy, would recall, in a somewhat bitter memoir, Johnson's obsession with education:

Nothing was in his thoughts more often. He sought guarantees that every boy or girl in the United States 'could have all the education he or she can take.' He was actually superstitious about the subject, and at times one expected him to advocate college as a cure for dandruff, or university as a specific for sore throats.²⁷

The 1960's was an era of educational reform. This reform movement, which shall be called the "equity" school reform movement, was a result of a combination of pressure from the civil rights movement and the reawakened interest in poverty. The equity reform movement focused on strategies to educate the poor. And the federal government under Lyndon Johnson responded with alacrity.

What comprised the Great Society? Essentially, Johnson weaved a comprehensive set of innovative programs that addressed the problem of poverty and the concerns of the civil rights movement.

These programs were chiefly in three areas: education, social welfare and civil rights.

In education, the major accomplishments fell into three categories. First, Johnson scored a breakthrough with the first federal aid to education bill. Second, he followed suit with a higher education act. And third, he incorporated pre-school education for the children of the poor--Head Start--in his poverty program.

Johnson's involvement in the educational policy process was two-fold. First, he would set broad policy. A close examination of the presidential policy process in the Higher Education Act revealed the strong influence of Johnson. Jose Chavez observed in his study that Johnson was mainly involved in setting broad policy and in influencing Congressional legislators. Johnson established "the basic outline of the HEA proposal."²⁸ However, he was "not involved in the details of how the ideas were developed into programs."²⁹ That was the task of his aides.

Second, he would personally apply pressure on members of Congress. Johnson as a former Senate Majority Leader was a member of the "club" in Congress. He enjoyed the company of Congressmen, knew their ways intimately and spend much time with them. Wilbur Cohen, a former Kennedy aide before becoming Johnson's Secretary of Health, Welfare and Education, would contrast the styles of two men." Kennedy was never part of the 'inner circle' or the 'club' when he was in Congress," Cohen recalled.³⁰ Congressman looked upon Kennedy as "a nice boy, but not as a guy who could get what

he wanted,"³¹ On the other hand, Johnson "always acted like he was still on the inside looking out," Cohen contended.³²

Then there was the "treatment." When Johnson wanted to have a certain bill passed he would employ any stratagem. The "treatment" could involve tears, humor, mimicry or a combination. Hubert Humphrey would observe that Johnson "was a master of working over people; not only working with people, but working them over."³³

The "treatment" could bring a soft approach: an invitation to the targeted member of Congress to go "over to the White House for Lady Bird and myself to sit down with him and have lunch with him."³⁴ As a last resort, Johnson would contact friends and family. He would declare that "if I've got to call out somebody back home that's his friend to get him moving, I'll do it."³⁵ Of more drastic still, he would call up Congressional wives to tell them that "your husband is not helping me."³⁶

A major reason for the success of Johnson and his aides was the type of federal aid that was proposed. Abandoning the general aid approach, they struck on the strategy of categorical aid; that is, aid to the children of the poor.

In summary, the Great Society transformed education in the America. Education became a major national issue that was addressed by a President of the United States who shaped an educational agenda. The Great Society defined the way issues of equity--poverty and civil rights--would be handled. And the federal government would project that national agenda onto the state and localities.

NIXON-FORD AND THE POLITICS OF MAINTENANCE

President Richard Nixon offered little innovative departures from his predecessor Lyndon B. Johnson in education. For the most part, he continued Great Society educational programs with their emphasis on the education of the poor. Neither did Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford offer new ideas.

Nixon was not an education minded President. One of his aides, Chester E. Finn, Jr., estimated that Nixon devoted but a scant 6 hours to educational issues in the first two years of his presidency.³⁷ His main interest was foreign affairs.

The one new idea was a federal research agency. In his message on education "reform" in 1970, Nixon created the National Institute of Education that would encourage and direct research in education. Nixon's rationale was that "we must stop pretending that we understand the mystery of the learning process."³⁸ Nixon hoped that the NIE would be "the first step toward reform."³⁹ A decade and a half later, the Reagan Administration would declare that one now knew what worked in education and dismantled NIE.

In his brief tenure, Gerald Ford mainly maintained Johnson's education programs and Nixon's National Institute of Education.

JIMMY CARTER AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Jimmy Carter continued the national presence in education. Most significantly, Carter created a separate Department of Education. This accomplishment was at the urging of the largest teacher union, the National Education Association. For the most

part, however, Carter did not place education as a major priority in his Presidency.

The NEA had two national priorities in education. First, it sought the creation of a Department of Education. Education had traditionally been an "office," originally designed to collect statistics, in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. NEA officials believe a separate cabinet department would confer upon education greater national importance. NEA officials pointed out that every major nation, except the United States, has departments or ministries of education.

In addition, the NEA desired a stronger federal role in education. From the early 1970's the NEA sought to expand federal expenditures from a high of 9% of the national education cost to as much as 33 1/3%. For the NEA, education was a national concern and responsibility.

There is some evidence that Carter wavered on the issue of a Department of Education after the election.⁴⁰ Critics maintained that only the thought of reelection and the fear of losing NEA support made him push on with the department. Certainly, Carter muted his support. In his 1978 State of the Union message, he would mention the creation of a new education department in only one sentence---and that after five paragraphs summarizing his success in streamlining the federal bureaucracy.

RONALD REAGAN AND THE EXCELLENCE REFORM MOVEMENT

Ironically, the second "Education President" of modern times has been Ronald Reagan. Reagan became an "Education President" by accident. He did not intend to either reform or strongly influence

education in this country. Indeed, he favored shoring up private schooling and decreasing federal funds and the federal role in public education. In 1980, he made a campaign pledge to dismantle the newly created Department of Education.

How did Ronald Reagan, then, become an "Education President?" Simply, Reagan responded to the major outside societal force of his era: foreign economic competition.

With the publication of the Department of Education's jeremiad, A NATION AT RISK: The Imperative for Education Reform, the excellence reform movement was officially launched. The aim of the excellence reform movement was to raise educational standards in order to groom the best and the brightest students so as to make America once again economically competitive. Education reform became a national political issue. And Ronald Reagan recognized a good idea when he saw it. Through the use of a "bully pulpit," Ronald Reagan preached the virtues of excellence reform.

The national direction in education reform provided by President Reagan was largely symbolic. He was the chief cheerleader to focus the nation's attention on school reform. He initiated no new federal education programs and constantly sought to reduce the federal budget in education. In education, his was a "rhetorical presidency."

By the 1980's, the American public and its national leaders once again perceived the link between economic well being and American education. The clear economic dominance of Japan laid the foundation for alarm in the American psyche. The underlying

assumption of the education reformers of the 1980's was that economic recovery depended on the revitalization of American education. Presidents could no longer relegate education to the bottom drawer of presidential priorities.

Nevertheless, Reagan sought to substantially reduce federal aid to education during his tenure. Reagan's budgets project huge cuts in education spending, at times amounting to one third below previous spending. Only his 1985 budgets--after the publication of a NATION AT RISK and an election year---reflected a slight increase. Democrats in Congress withstood much of the proposed cuts.

THE POLITICS OF NATION AT RISK

If any man could be said to have been singlehandedly responsible for the excellence school reform movement it would be Terrel Bell. As Reagan's first Secretary of Education, Bell commissioned A NATION AT RISK without presidential approval. He surreptitiously engineered a report he knew would be critical of education. His aim was to prod the President into exercising leadership in education. In the process he launched a school reform movement.

What Bell intended was less than to "stage an event that would jar the people into action on behalf of their educational system."⁴¹ He wanted to commission a panel of prestigious---and like-minded-educators that would be "charged by the president himself to perform the task of appraising the conditions of our schools and reporting to the nation on what should be done."⁴²

Unfortunately, he was rebuffed by the White House. Reagan aides informed him that reports of federal commission usually have little impact but more importantly, education was the province of the states.

Undaunted, Bell proceeded to make a bold gamble. He commissioned the study within his own jurisdiction as Secretary of Education---without the imprimatur of the President's office. This brought the "movement conservatives" down on him who considered his ploy tantamount to "an act of insubordination."⁴³ The gamble eventually cost him his job. However, the report generated an educational revolution.

However, the report generated an educational revolution. A NATION AT RISK caught Reagan by surprise. His first speech in support of the new study mainly rehashed his old educational agenda of school prayer and tuition tax credits, with minor mention of excellence issues. But as Reagan perceived the political windfall that Bell had wrought, his speeches grew more knowledgeable and more stronger in support of excellence issues. He gave 51 major speeches alone in his first term "in which he had impressed the American people with the vital importance of education and the need for reform."⁴⁴ Bell had succeeded in converting Ronald Reagan to the cause of public education. For Bell, Reagan had become "A fantastic endorser of our efforts to build momentum for school reform."⁴⁵ Through use of the "bully pulpit," Ronald Reagan could truly be said to have been largely responsible for the excellence school reform movement of the 1980's.

What has been the impact of the excellence reform movement on the schools? It appears to have been mixed. At first glance, the excellence reform movement seems to have been a moderate success. Five years after A NATION AT RISK was released, more than 220,000 copies were distributed by the Department of Education and an estimated 5 to 6 million copies were distributed through newspaper and magazine reprints including foreign translations.⁴⁶ And the states appeared to respond to the challenge. By spring of 1988, all but five states had raised high school graduation requirements. Over two dozen had made educational improvements ranging from higher teacher salaries to new discipline codes.⁴⁷

GEORGE BUSH AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

President George Bush inherited the educational agenda of his predecessor, Ronald Reagan. Bush was determined to continue the excellence reform movement begun in the Reagan White House.

For the most part, Bush, like Reagan, practiced an educational politics of the "bully pulpit." He declared that, for him, educational leadership would be mainly "hortatory."⁴⁸ Like Reagan, he perceived education to be a responsibility of the states with the role of the federal government to suggest a national agenda for the states. Consequently, his educational budgets were minimal prompting the educational establishment to brand them "lackluster."⁴⁹

Nevertheless, Bush's contribution to excellence reform was significant. First, he called an Educational Summit of all the governors to establish national educational goals. Second, he shaped the national education agenda through his strong emphasis

on choice plans. Choice meant that any student would be permitted to attend my school he or she desired. Choice was an idea that was easily compressible and attractive to parents, students and politicians in search of no-cost solutions. Third, he proclaims that the nation, through the states, establish national standards in education.

A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

There are questions that remain concerning the role of the Presidents in American education. Is there a need for some sort of a national framework in education that would formalize a national concern in education? And finally, since education is a state responsibility, is there need for a constitutionally amendment to establish a national context for education?

First, let us examine whether the individual states following the reasoning of Article X and the Rodriguez decision, declared in their respective constitutions either that education was a right or made education an important part of their state functions.

Only three states have declared education a fundamental right in their constitutions. Each state provides a section at the beginning of their constitutions enumerating a declaration of rights. Those states that provide a right to education are North Carolina, Wyoming, and Ohio. The other states refrain from enunciating such a right.

WHAT EXPERTS THINK

What do scholarly experts think about a constitutional amendment? Twenty national experts in educational policy responded to a purposeful sample mailed by the author. A purposeful sample

is a non-randomized sample of sub-group-such as experts in a field-that may give highly useful qualitative data. A majority opposed a constitutional amendment that would establish a right to education. Eleven were opposed, seven in favor, two believed it already implicit in the constitution, and one was undecided.

Two respondents who were in leading policy roles in the Reagan and Johnson administration did not view the question of a constitutional amendment as irrelevant. Former Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, who sparked the excellence reform movement with A NATION AT RISK, thought that such a constitutional amendment was necessary.⁵⁰ On the other hand, former U.S. Commissioner of Education in the Johnson Administration, Harold Howe II, believed that such powers were already implicit in the Constitution and that "other cases (besides the Rodriguez decision) should be brought to test this issue in the Supreme Court."⁵¹

Two key advocates of excellence reform opposed an amendment. Professor Chester E. Finn, Jr. former Assistant Secretary of Education in the Reagan Administration, and his co-author on some excellence reports, Professor Diane Ravitch of Columbia University, were not in favor of such an amendment. Finn held that education was a "proper function of the states."⁵² And Ravitch feared "messing with the constitution" since, in her view, "amendments should be rare."⁵³

CONCLUSION

What are we to conclude? First, we have seen that presidential leadership in education has increased since World War II, much of it determined by the economic needs of the nation.

Roosevelt and Truman were concerned with a workforce returning from the war that had to cope with a more sophisticated economy. Kennedy and Johnson sought a more economic well being of American society by helping the poor educationally. These policies of educating the disadvantaged were continued by Nixon, Ford and Carter. Reagan followed by Bush responded to a more acute economic condition---the deterioration of the American economy from intense foreign competition. Only Eisenhower concentrated on a non-economic threat---the space race with the Soviet Union and heating up the Cold War.

Secondly, there has been a growing awareness in the past generation by the American public and policymakers of the vital indicated the public's desire for national leadership in education for America to successfully complete economically.

Third, presidential candidates and cabinet aides have perceived the need for some presidential direction in education, no matter how vague. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell would conclude that the nation "should be galvanized into a nationwide program."⁵⁴ In 1988 George Bush would declare himself an "education president." And Democratic Presidential candidate Michael Dukakis would echo similar sentiments by declaring that the President of the United States becomes this nation's number one advocate for education. No matter that these advocates for presidential leadership had no clear idea of the role of the president in education. They perceived the need to rethink that role.

Fourth, the role of the President still is confined by constitutional constraints. Whether the future reassessment of education and the presidency will result in a constitutional amendment or a continuation of the rhetorical presidency with the president as "Teacher and Preacher in Chief" remains to be seen. Surely, the implications of the excellence reform movement suggests a greater role for the president and federal leadership.

Finally, recent educational history suggests that the educational establishment has yet to lead in educational reform or in national education direction. Moreover, education in the nation responds to socio-economic and political realities beyond the confines of the schoolhouse door. This has meant that government, especially the federal government, will continue to assume that function. And the final arbiter of national educational policy may continue to be the President of the United States.

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